

Extensive political changes effected by President Sadat since early summer—including his recent dismissal of four top advisers—represent a strengthening of his personal control

Egypt: Sadat's Political Changes

Egyptian President Sadat has made drastic changes in his inner circle of advisers, his Cabinet, and the country's grass-roots political structure since last spring. The cumulative effect of these actions has been a retreat from Sadat's political liberalization program, greater concentration of authority in the President's office,

Last spring four political parties were competing actively in Egypt. Opposition figures were reentering politics, a relatively free opposition press was being published, an unprecedented level of grass-roots politicking was under way, and government policy was being debated

aggressively in the People's Assembly.

Today, the four parties have all halted activity; two were forced out of action by Sadat and two chose to close down for want of realistic prospects. In their place, Sadat has created a new party of his own.

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The opposition press has largely been silenced, the most outspoken critics of last spring have been banned from politics, and journalists and academicians are under scrutiny from a "Socialist Prosecutor" charged with enforcing a new "code of ethics" for Egyptians. Two Cabinet changes since April have resulted in an 80-percent turnover, while four of the six men in Sadat's inner circle have been ousted. Major figures in the military hierarchy have also been replaced, and new governors for some provinces are likely to be named soon.

Domestic Challenges

The changes began last April against the backdrop of serious economic problems that Egyptian leaders feared could produce riots similar to those that occurred in Cairo in January 1977. Stalled peace negotiations and growing boldness among government opponents intent on testing the limits of Sadat's program of democratic liberalization added to the pressure.

[Redacted]

The first clue to Sadat's intended response to the domestic challenges was provided by Anis Mansour, an Egyptian journalist noted for reflecting the President's views. In an article in April, Mansour suggested that Sadat provide a new "correction" to the Egyptian revolution—a catchword referring to Sadat's popular program to dismantle the late President Nasir's repressive political system.

Systematic Approach

In retrospect, Sadat's approach has been systematic.

[Redacted]



President Sadat



Vice President Mubarak

[Redacted]

Sadat outlined the institutional dimensions of his "corrective" in late July, declaring the formation of his new political party—thus sealing the fate of the then-ruling party and its leader, Prime Minister Salim—and pointing toward the personnel changes that were to follow.

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His reconfiguration of the political system, against the background of a new era of peace with Israel, required new men at the top. He named a new Prime Minister in September, then dismissed two-thirds of the Cabinet, including his Minister of War and sometime peace negotiator General Jamasi. Sadat followed in October with the abrupt sidelining of two other longtime advisers, Ashraf Marwan and Sayid Mari.

Mubarak's Involvement

The main beneficiary of the personnel changes is Vice President Mubarak,

Whatever role Mubarak may have played, however, the explanation for the changes lies with Sadat and must be seen in the context of all the changes that have occurred since spring.

Old advisers are out [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] the ousters contribute to the new look Sadat promised would accompany peace.

Mubarak's role appears to be that of Sadat's executive agent. He is to oversee government performance, ensuring that it conforms to Sadat's "corrective."

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